



West Point at 200

Story by Joe Tombrello



GENERAL of the Army Douglas MacArthur once said that the words “Duty, Honor, Country” were the cornerstone upon which worthwhile lives and institutions could be built. Nowhere is that more true than at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y.

As the academy enters its third century of service to the nation, its mission remains the same as that established by Congress on March 16, 1802: to produce well-trained and dedicated Army officers committed to careers of selfless service to the nation. It is a goal, and a process, whose foundations date from the earliest days of the nation the academy continues to serve.

Joe Tombrello is the chief of command information in the USMA Public Affairs Office.

Photos courtesy USMA unless otherwise credited.

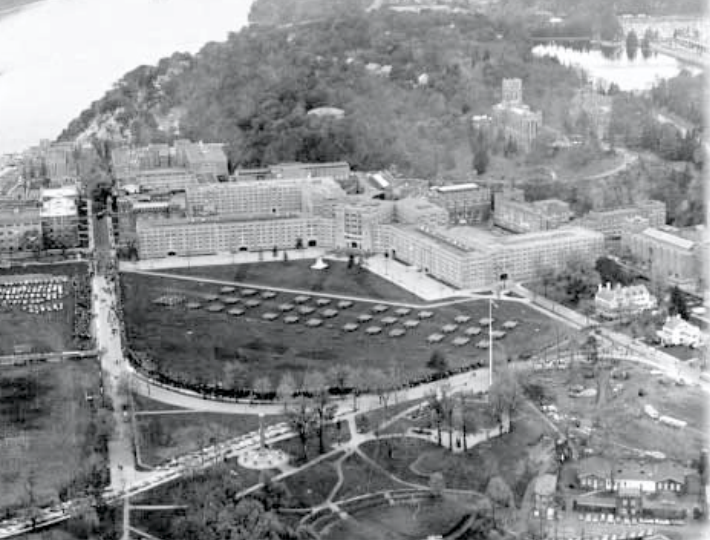
(Left, top) The academy's band plays as the colors pass in review.

(Left, center) Graduating cadets wait for the ceremony to begin.

(Left, bottom) Cadets enjoy a meal in Washington Hall's dining facility.

(Right) White hats fill the sky in the traditional post-graduation hat toss.





The academy continued to grow throughout the post-World War II period, as this 1972 aerial view emphasizes. Note the cadets in formation, and the crowds of onlookers lining the roads.

A Military Foundation

A true national treasure and historic site, West Point was first occupied in January 1778 as a Revolutionary War outpost. It is America's oldest continuously garrisoned Army installation, the nation's first engineering school and the home of the U.S. Corps of Cadets since 1802.

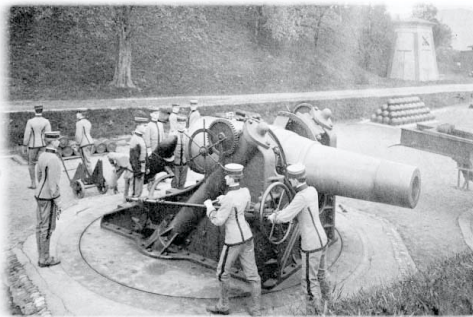
The British and Americans both recognized

the strategic military importance of New York's Hudson River, especially since in the late 18th century ships were the primary means of transportation for commerce and military logistics. GEN George Washington referred to West Point as the "key to the continent" since it dominated a sharp bend in the Hudson and thus effectively controlled waterborne traffic between Canada, New England and the

southern colonies, as well as to the Great Lakes and the interior of the American continent.

Thaddeus Kosciuszko, a Pole and one of the heroes of the decisive American victory at Saratoga, began to supervise the construction of fortifications at West Point in 1778, and Washington transferred his headquarters there in 1779. Continental soldiers built forts, artillery

Smartly dressed cadets learn to operate large-caliber artillery guns during summer camp sometime in the early 1900s.



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*West Point
1802-2002*

batteries and redoubts at the site, and extended a 100-ton iron chain across the Hudson to restrict river traffic. The extensive fortifications helped prevent the British from taking control of the vital strategic site.

A School for Soldiers

During the nation's war for independence the Continental Army was forced to rely largely upon foreign-born military officers and engineers for leadership and technical skills. Many of our founding fathers — including Washington, Henry Knox, Alexander Hamilton and John Adams — sought both the professional military expertise necessary to win independence and the mathematical and scientific education they believed necessary to maintain it. Others, however, opposed the founding of a military academy because they feared the establishment of a professional officer corps and standing army.

This long debate continued until after the election of President Thomas Jefferson, when legislation to establish a military academy quickly moved through Congress. The final sections of an "Act Fixing the Military Peace Establishment of the United States," were signed by Jefferson on March 16, 1802.

The legislation separated the engineers and artillery, and authorized a corps of engineers with a total of seven officers and 10 cadets and provided that they constitute a military academy at West Point. The military academy would have both military and civilian benefits,



Cadets stand inspection during the 1899 summer encampment.



Cadets march to chapel, 1966.

broaden the composition of America's military leadership to make it more representative of society, and provide the military technical training for national defense and scientific education necessary to build the young nation.

Academy graduates made their first significant military contributions during the War of 1812. Nearly all of the initial 100 graduates participated in the conflict, and many made vital engineering contributions to the nation's defensive fortifications.

COL Sylvanus Thayer, considered to be



Students stand on tree-shaded Professor's Row, 1863.



Cadets of the class of 1980 are sworn in. The first female cadets had entered West Point four years earlier.

the father of the academy, was superintendent from 1817 to 1833. He upgraded academic standards, instilled military discipline and emphasized honorable conduct. Aware of the need for engineers, Thayer made civil engineering the foundation of the curriculum. USMA graduates were largely responsible for construction of the nation's initial railway lines, bridges, harbors and roads.

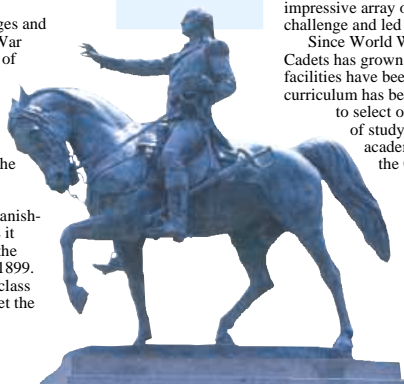
In 1843, legislation was passed specifying that the Corps of Cadets would consist of a cadet from each congressional district, as well as others from the territories and nation at large. This was indicative of a desire to make the academy a national institution that would attract individuals from all walks of life and all parts of the country.

After gaining experience and national recognition during the War with Mexico, academy graduates firmly established West Point in the national consciousness by dominating the highest ranks on both sides of the Civil War.

The growth of civilian colleges and technical schools in post-Civil War America fostered the expansion of the academy's curriculum beyond the strict engineering focus. Following the creation of Army post-graduate command and staff schools, military officials came to view the academy as the first step in a continuing Army education.

The 1898 outbreak of the Spanish-American War and the demands it placed on the Army resulted in the early graduation of the class of 1899. It was the first, but not the last, class that would be accelerated to meet the

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This statue of a George Washington astride his horse graces the academy's Plain.

need for officers in the field. Congress authorized an increase in the size of the Corps of Cadets to 481 in 1900. The Philippine Insurrection closely followed, and the Class of 1901 was also graduated early.

At the 1902 centennial celebration President Theodore Roosevelt said: "No other institution in this land has contributed so many names as West Point has contributed to the honor roll of the nation's greatest citizens."

The nation was caught unprepared for World War I, but West Point graduates again rose to high positions of responsibility — providing 34 corps and division commanders. Under the command of GEN John J. Pershing, class of 1886, the inexperienced American Army was quickly trained, equipped and deployed to the brutal trenches of the western front, where it contributed greatly to the Allied victory.

After the war Superintendent Douglas MacArthur diversified the school's academic program and pushed for major changes in the physical fitness program. "Every cadet an athlete" became an important goal. Additionally, cadet management of the honor system was formalized with the creation of the Cadet Honor Committee.

In 1942 Congress expanded the size of the Corps of Cadets to 2,496. Again, West Point met the needs of the Army as the Class of 1943 graduated six months early and subsequent classes, from June 1943 through 1947, graduated in three years. West Point graduates figured prominently in the war's conduct, holding 89 division and higher commands. Dwight Eisenhower, MacArthur, Omar Bradley, Henry Arnold, Mark Clark, George S. Patton Jr. and Joseph Stilwell were among the impressive array of graduates who met the challenge and led the Allies to victory.

Since World War II, West Point's Corps of Cadets has grown to 4,000. The school's facilities have been modernized, and the curriculum has been expanded to permit cadets to select one of 21 majors and 24 fields of study. Women first entered the academy in 1976 as members of the Class of 1980.

Duty, Honor, Country

From humble beginnings has developed the legacy of the "Long Gray Line," that unbroken parade of graduates now entering its third century of service to our nation. Members of that line include U.S. presidents Ulysses S. Grant and Dwight D. Eisenhower; Heisman Trophy winners Felix Blanchard, Glenn Davis and Pete Dawkins; Generals of the Army Douglas MacArthur, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Henry H. Arnold and Omar Bradley; architect and builder of the Panama Canal George Goethals; Roscoe Robinson Jr., the first black four-star general; Edward White II, the first American to walk in space;



More than a simple military school, West Point is a highly respected — and academically demanding — institution of higher learning.



Reconciliation Plaza honors those cadets and graduates who died in action during the Civil War — both for the Union and the Confederacy.

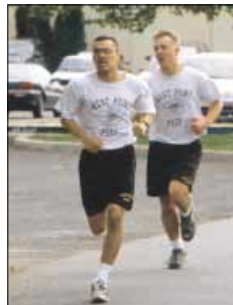
*West Point
1802-2002*



GEN H. Norman Schwarzkopf reviews the Corps of Cadets during a post-Desert Storm visit.

Prepping for the Point

Story by Joe Tombrello



Physical training — including both running and weightlifting — is also an important part of each USMAPS cadet's daily routine.

EACH year approximately 150 active-duty and reserve-component soldiers are offered admissions to the U.S. Military Academy Preparatory School, commonly referred to as the Prep School, West Point Prep or USMAPS. Although some soldiers may be offered admissions directly to West Point, most attend the Prep School first.

West Point's current Cadet Brigade Commander, Cadet First CPT Andrew T. Blickhahn, is a Prep School graduate. Blickhahn enlisted in the Army upon his 1994 high school graduation and served in military intelligence

until selected to attend USMAPS in 1997. Along with the responsibilities of being the highest-ranking cadet, Blickhahn is also captain of the academy's well-regarded Sport Parachute Team.

"I talked to my commanding officer about West Point after a lieutenant I served with in Korea explained the whole application and selection process to me," said Blickhahn. "I had grown to love the Army by that point in my career, and I really wanted to contribute all I could to make the Army a better place to be."

As the name implies, West Point Prep prepares soldiers for success at West Point through an intensive curriculum focused on English, mathematics, military instruction and physical training.

"Attending the Prep School was the smartest thing I could have done," Blickhahn said. "The school refreshed my academic skills and introduced me

to 200 comrades and West Point classmates. I've met life-long friends and comrades in arms because of the Prep experience."

"The Corps of Cadets needs motivated, competent, proud soldiers from the Army to join their ranks and lead the Army of tomorrow," said Blickhahn. "I encourage all soldiers interested in becoming officers to apply." □

How to Apply

PREP School applicants must be U.S. citizens, under 22 years old prior to July 1 of the year entering the Prep School, unmarried with no legal obligation to support dependents, high school graduates or have a GED, be of high moral character, and have a sincere interest in attending West Point and becoming Army officers. Soldiers who meet the basic eligibility requirements and have SAT scores greater than 1050, or ACT composite scores of 23 or higher, are especially encouraged to apply.

All applicants must obtain endorsements from their unit company commanders. While this endorsement is considered a nomination, soldiers should also obtain additional nominations from their congressional sources. Samples of the commander's endorsement and congressional nomination are available online at www.usma.edu/admissions.

Application requirements must be completed by April 1 to be considered for an appointment to West Point or the Prep School in July of the same year. Interested soldiers should contact CPT Cliff Hodges, Soldier Admissions Officer, at (DSN) 688-5780, toll free (800) 822-USMA extension 5780, commercial (845) 938-5780 or e-mail tc2324@usma.edu.



Mathematics are a key part of the USMAPS' challenging curriculum.

West Point's Other Soldiers

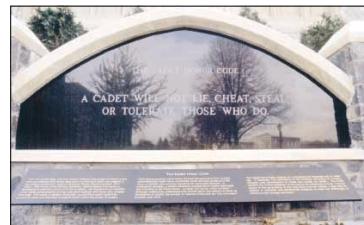
Story by SSG Marcia Hart

FOR 200 years West Point has supplied the Army with commissioned leaders of character. Since the academy's founding, enlisted soldiers and noncommissioned officers have played a vital role in shaping future Army officers, as well as providing vital support and training.

"It is the time that the enlisted soldiers spend with cadets, teaching them the ways of the service, how to work with the young people they will be leading and giving them a love of the service and of the troops that is so very vital if they are going to be effective leaders in the field," said USMA historian Dr. Steve Grove. "Perhaps the most famous of all enlisted men was Marty Maher, the subject of the famous movie 'The Long Gray Line' with Tyrone Power and Maureen O'Hara."

Maher, an enlisted man who rose through the ranks, had been a waiter in the Cadet Mess, a swimming instructor and the Cadet Gym custodian until he retired as a technical sergeant, equivalent to today's sergeant first class. He was a source of support and solace to cadets for 50 years, serving as guide, friend and father confessor to thousands of cadets.

One of the most notable connections between the enlisted men and women and Corps of Cadets is the USMA Band. The band at West Point



The values of West Point's famed Cadet Honor Code are enshrined on this monument.

SSG Alberto Belancourt

Teaching cadets about Army life is only one of the many tasks soldiers assigned to West Point perform. Enlisted members of the 1st Battalion, 1st Infantry Regiment, and such tenant units as the medical and dental activities provide vital support services that help accomplish the USMA mission.

"An assignment to West Point is unique for enlisted soldiers," said West Point's CSM Mary E. Sutherland. "Our role in the accomplishment of the USMA mission is one of great importance. We represent the initial exposure for the Corps of Cadets, and I feel a special responsibility in ensuring that this exposure accurately reflects the professionalism, dedication and ability of the enlisted soldiers." □

dates back to the earliest days of the Military Academy.

"From reveille to taps, from the reception-day parade to the graduation parade, the enlisted men and women of the band are central to the West Point experience," said Grove.

Likewise, tactical noncommissioned officers have played a key role in the academy's history. They have mentored, counseled, led, coached, trained and evaluated cadets as part of the Brigade Tactical Department. They oversee each cadet's academic, military, physical and moral-ethical development, working within the framework of the cadet companies.

"Initially, TAC NCOs were only assigned at the regimental level, which gave cadets only very limited exposure to NCOs and their role in the Army," said Corps of Cadets CSM Jeffrey Greer. "As years passed, officials increased the cadets' exposure to, and their ability to interact with, NCOs."

SSG John Vaccaro



A graduating cadet shakes the hand of an enlisted member of the academy's staff.

SSG Marcia Hart is the NCOIC of the USMA Public Affairs Office.